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ACES! *Alton Central Education Spotlight*

BY SYDNEY LEGGETT
Director of Instruction
Alton Central School

Alton Central School is pleased to welcome the Prescott Farm Environmental Education Center to our educational program. Originally, this program was called CO-SEEDS (community-based school environmental education) and founded through Antioch University as a project for schools and their communities to work together to develop place-based learning. By using the local natural and cultural environment as the setting for learning - and involving students in addressing community needs through hands-on service - CO-SEED projects seek to connect students, schools, curricula, and community.

Prescott Conservancy, located on White Oaks Road in Laconia, is continuing the tradition of CO-SEEDS by offering on-site programs for teachers and students to learn how to develop units

and lessons that involve the local environment and community. Each Wednesday in the spring, we have our own environmental educator, or "Naturalist in Residence," who spends a full school day with a specific grade level. Our naturalist this spring from Prescott Conservancy is Sarah Dunham. Dunham has a B.A. in Anthropology/Archaeology from Dickinson College and a M.S. in Environmental Education from Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene.

Before the scheduled day, Ms. Dunham and the grade-level teachers discuss what's happening in their curriculum at the time and plan activities to integrate environmental and/or community resources. When the day arrives, the students are off and running, or jumping, hopping, slithering, sliding, to investigate the world around them.

Grade two began the series with a day of "quests" around the school that pro-

moted scientific inquiry skills and investigation. Grade three went "ponding" to explore vernal pools, amphibians and plant life in and around our local waters. Grade one studied the life cycle by hatching their chicks, and Ms. Dunham had them explore other creatures that lay eggs; Bucky the turtle came in to visit with her that day, and the students had a chance to get a close-up look at this beautiful egg-laying turtle. Joan Rees' pre-school program also had a chance to meet Bucky while they used their five senses to explore. Next in the series are grade four students, who will enhance their Native American and Early American studies by learning how to make natural dyes and how to spin wool that's taken right off the sheep.

Alton Central School hopes to continue this relationship with Prescott Farm in years to come by making the Naturalist in Residence program a regular part of



COURTESY PHOTO ■

GRADE THREE students went "ponding" to explore local waters as part of the Naturalist in Residence program at Alton Central.

our professional development and curriculum. We know that our students benefit from learning about what's around them, and that inquiry and problem solving lead to more meaningful,

deeper knowledge. We might even be inspiring some young students towards a career in the environmental fields, which are among the fastest growing career areas of the 21st century. As the

ancient proverb goes, "Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children."